DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 245 065 CE 038 994

AUTHOR	Holmes, Dallas L.; Mortensen, Mark A.
TITLE	Discussion Techniques for Adult Educators.
INSTITUTION	Utah State Univ., Logan.
SPONS AGENCY	Utah State Board of Education, Salt Lake City. Div. of Adult Education and Training.
PUB DATE	83
NOTE	36p.; For a related document, see CE 038 995.
AVAILABLE FROM	Conference and Institute Division, UMC 50 A, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322 (Videotape loan charge--$15.00).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; Classroom Techniques; *Discussion (Teaching Technique); *Discussion Groups; *Group Discussion; *Guidelines; Interpersonal Communication; Leaders Guides; Postsecondary Education; *Problem Solving; Teaching Methods; Workshops
IDENTIFIERS	Buzz Groups; Chain Reaction Forum (Technique); Huddle Groups; Reaction Symposium (Technique)

ABSTRACT

This manual describes four discussion techniques that may be used in an adult education setting following a presentation by one or more resource persons. These four techniques--the huddle group, the buzz group, the chain reaction forum, and the reaction symposium--are designed to help the learner acquire information, develop skills in problem solving, and learn how to apply the knowledge he or she has gained. The first section of the manual provides background material for using the discussion techniques, such as planning criteria, qualifications for resource leaders, and discussion criteria. The manual then focuses on the four discussion techniques, including an introduction and overview for each and explaining how to put them into use. A bibliography and list of suggested readings complete the guide. (This booklet can be used in conjunction with a separately available videotape.) (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED245065

Utah State University

Life Span Learning Programs:

Conference & Institute Division

DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES

for

ADULT EDUCATORS

CE038994

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D Holmes

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Discussion Techniques for Adult Educators

Utah State University
Life Span Learning Programs:

Conference and Institute
Division

Dallas L. Holmes
Mark A. Mortensen

Funded under the
Adult Education Act
PL 91-230
ABE 310

Endorsed by
Utah Community Education Association
Adult Education Association of Utah

Introduction

Much of the knowledge acquired by adults is obtained by participating in discussions in the home, at church, in offices, laboratories, factories, places of business, public meetings, and in the classroom.

There are many methods, techniques, and devices which are used by adult educators in both formal and informal settings that enhance and add variety to discussions used in the adult classroom. This manual will focus on four discussion techniques. Each of these techniques may be utilized following a presentation by one or more resource persons. These four techniques -----the Huddle Group, the Buzz Group, the Chain Reaction Forum, and the Reaction Symposium----- are designed to help the learner acquire information, develop skills in problem solving, and learn how to apply the knowledge he has gained.

Implications of the Techniques

In the four instructional techniques, adults will learn according to their degree of participation. Research demonstrates that those who are actively involved, both physically and mentally, in discussions will learn more than those who are not.

The use of these techniques increases the tendency of adults to be more tolerant and broad-minded in problem solving. Learners discover that there are many points of view and various sides to an issue.

These group dynamics techniques also encourage good listening skills. We learn to listen actively to those participating in discussion groups. Active listening will help the adult learner to develop skills in avoiding future misunderstandings in the world of work and in their interpersonal relationships.

Perhaps of paramount importance, however, is the fact that these four instructional techniques provide a cooperative means of bringing together the facts and opinions of the members of the group as they relate to the presentations shared by a resource leader.

Planning Criteria

In all four instructional techniques, careful planning is essential to meeting the needs of the group. Consideration of the following criteria will insure the proper selection of issues and topics of discussion for the specialized groups.

1. Members of the discussion group should have an interest in the problem or issue proposed.
2. The problem or issue which is discussed should have some common relevancy to the members of the group.
3. The issues or problems must be clearly defined by the resource leader and understood by members of the group who are to react to them.
4. The problem should be of a scope and clarity that will arouse sustained discussion by the group.
5. The issue or problem should be able to be clearly divided into logical elements.
6. The topic discussed should focus on the cognitive skills of problem solving utilizing analysis and synthesis.

The Resource Leader Criteria

In applying each of these four specialized techniques, the resource person or leader brings expertise and shares salient issues surrounding a predetermined topic with the discussion group. Effective discussions with small groups of adults in an instructional setting requires able leadership on the part of a resource leader.

The resource leader should possess some unique skills if the learning experience is to be valuable to those participating in the discussions. The following criteria should be considered in selecting appropriate resource leaders to address a group using any of the four discussion related techniques.

1. Resource leaders must be able to express themselves clearly and concisely. They should have the ability to effectively communicate with the discussion groups. Resource leaders should be sensitive to the cultural and educational backgrounds of the group to which they are presenting.

2. Resource leaders should be sound thinkers. They should have the ability to synthesize and analyze specific and relevant issues associated with a particular topic and be able to later present those issues to the discussion group.

3. The resource leader should spark enthusiasm and be sincere. This will generate positive interaction on the part of the discussion groups.

4. Resource leaders should remain reasonably impartial with regard to the issues or problems which are raised during their presentations.

Discussion Criteria

In each of the four specialized instructional techniques the learner is required to interact with the resource leader. The interaction which takes place occurs following an opportunity by members of the group to discuss issues or problems which may have been raised by the resource leader.

The following suggestions should be noted and used as a guide to a well organized discussion.

1. Group members should insure that they're aquainted with one another.

2. Each discussion group should have a chalkboard and eraser, or flip chart, or cut sheets of paper available to analyze comments and suggestions made by the group.

3. Each member should be encouraged to participate in the discussion.

4. No speeches or monopolizing of time should be allowed by any individual in the group.

5. Group members should keep the discussion on track. They should make sure that discussion is directed toward the purposes of the group.

6. They should keep spirits high in the group, encourage informality and good humor. Each member should participate, and respect and appreciate all ideas which are shared with the group.

7. Group members should close the group discussion by formulating generalizations, conclusions, or applications which may have been asked for in the specific technique they were utilizing.

HUDDLE GROUPS

The Huddle Group
Introduction & Overview

It is often difficult to get part cipation in discussions when a large group is involved, unless the group is for a time subdivided into smaller groups. This can be done with the use of the Huddle Group Technique.

People naturally form groups. Most informal discussion in adult settings is done by persons in small groups. A group of three to five is a normal conversation group and appropriate size for a huddle group. Physically and psychologically members in a group this size are close together.

The Huddle Group Process

The most common practice in using the huddle system is for the resource leader to introduce the problem or issue, clarify it if necessary, and then motivate the group to action.

When the group is properly motivated, the resource person asks them to get together in smaller groups, huddle groups, of three to five persons and discuss the problem or issue raised. One individual may be designated as the group leader. The groups are convened for ten to twenty minutes, depending upon the question under consideration. During this time, the groups discuss possible solutions to the issues posed to them.

During the huddle period the members of the group exchange experiences, share ideas, test possible solutions, and may agree on a possible resolution to the issue at hand.

When the allotted time has been used, or when it appears that there has been thorough discussion of the problem by all of the huddle groups, the resource leader reconvenes the class and asks representatives from each group to make a brief report. The resource person may want to summarize the separate reports on a chalkboard.

As the brief reports are made, the resource leader may encourage questions from other groups, or may delay the questioning period until all the huddle groups have reported.

When all groups have reported, it is usually possible for the resource leader to lead the group discussion in summarizing the principles that have been enumerated. A plan of action may then be formulated. If additional information is needed, the classroom instructor may provide it, or a study committee may be set up.

BUZZ GROUPS

Utah State University: Life Span Learning Programs
Conference and Institute Division

Dallas L. Holmes
Mark A. Mortensen

Discussion Techniques for Adult Educators

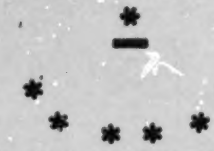
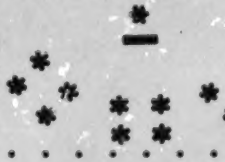
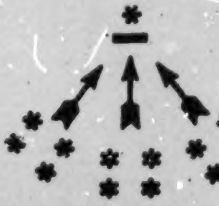
Summary Leadership Guide

COPY THIS PAGE FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP GUIDE

This videotape is approximately 25 minutes in length. The first part of the tape outlines those steps which need to be considered before implimenting any of the four techniques. The topics outlined are:

1. Issues and Topic Selection for discussion.
2. Resource Leader/Presenter Criteria.
3. Discussion Criteria.

Next, the tape outlines each of the four techniques, highlighting the procedures and mechanics for effective utilization of the processes.

Technique	Group Size	Description	Room Arrangement	Discussion Group Duration
Huddle Group	2-3 persons	Groups discuss a single issue raised by the resource leader		3-5 minutes
Buzz Group	4-6 persons	Each group discusses an issue raised by resource leader		5-15 minutes
Chain Reaction Forum	4-10 persons	Groups discuss presentation & formulate questions to be asked to the resource leader		15-20 minutes
Reaction Symposium	3 or 4 persons	Group members in turn react to presentation (Act as panel)		Each Reaction 3-5 minutes

The Buzz Group
Introduction & Overview

In the buzz group technique, elements of the issues or problems raised by the resource leader are divided so that they may be treated by small groups.

The Buzz Group is most commonly used when one is attempting to involve a group of 20 to 30 individuals in an intensive discussion surrounding issues and problems raised by the resource leader. Buzz groups, or sub-groups, may be as small as 4 to 6 or as large as 12 to 15 individuals.

The Buzz Group Process

Once the resource leader has isolated the elements which are to be considered , the buzz groups are formed. Each buzz group is assigned a specific element of the issue to be discussed and a discussion leader is chosen. Members of the buzz group are brought together in a face to face situation or in circle groups in order to facilitate the group dynamics associated with the brief discussion. Members of the buzz group are invited to share ideas in a round-robin fashion with other members of their group.

Buzz sessions generally last from four to ten minutes in length depending on the complexity of the elements of the issues or question raised by the resource leader. When the entire group is reconvened, the resource leader normally calls for a report from the discussion leader of each buzz group.

The use of the buzz group technique stimulates creativity and problem solving among members of the group in a relatively short period of time. It is also a rapid-fire method of obtaining diverse ideas and of summarizing issues raised by the resource leader.

When the group is reconvened, the skills of the resource leader come into play. The resource leader must assist the class in pulling together all of the elements discussed by each group into a comprehensive solution to the problem or issue at hand. This process may uncover further issues of concern that require additional inquiry.

CHAIN REACTION

FORUM

The Chain Reaction Forum
Introduction & Overview

The chain reaction forum is most appropriately utilized when the purpose of the small group is to focus or formulate questions to be asked of a resource person. This technique involves the selection of an excellent resource leader who will make a presentation on a topic outlined by the classroom instructor. The resource leader should feel comfortable in being asked focused and open-ended questions by the chain reaction forum groups.

Prior to the presentation, the classroom instructor should spend time in selecting the chain reaction forum groups. Chain reaction forum groups are of three to four individuals whose purpose is to listen carefully to the discussion, question and evaluate the presentation, record the most important issues presented by the resource person, and conceptualize questions to be asked of the resource person.

Questioning Techniques

Group members should become aware of the types of questions they might pose to the resource leader. Prior to the resource leader's presentation, the classroom instructor should discuss the types of questions that might be asked of the resource person. There are three basic question types which chain reaction forum group members might consider asking.

1. Fact-finding Questions---
...require factual answers from the resource leader...generally only one right answer...asked in order to check group members' own knowledge of facts and validate it by the resource leader.

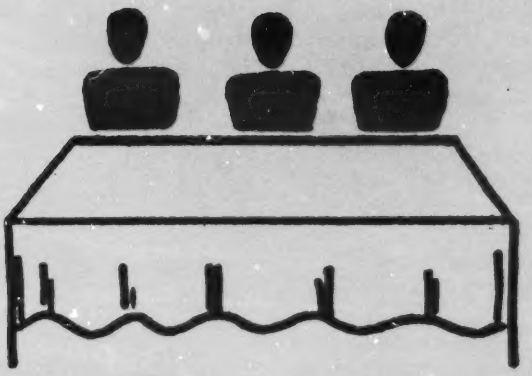
2. Questions Seeking Interpretation---
...seeking interpretation of a concept or point of view...asking for meaning... really no one correct answer...

3. Questions of evaluation---
...ask the resource leaders for their point of view rather than to interpret what others may mean...

The Chain Reaction Forum Process

Following the presentation by the resource leader, the Chain Reaction Forum Groups spend five to ten minutes discussing the presentation made and developing questions for the resource leader. Following the development period, the questions are then posed to the resource leader.

A dialogue ensues between the groups and the resource leader to clarify and respond to the questions posed.



REACTION SYMPOSIUM

The Reaction Symposium
Introduction & Overview

The Reaction Symposium is another group dynamics device which is used in an audience situation. Selected group members represent the audience in reacting to the issues raised by the resource leader or presenter. The Reaction Symposium normally involves three or four group members selected to serve on a reaction panel. The panel's responsibility is to react to the presentation given by the resource leader. Members of the panel may receive materials from the presenter in advance which will allow them preparation time to develop reaction statements to the presenter's remarks. Often times, however, such prepared and written remarks are unavailable to members of the reaction panel. The reaction panel then must be prepared to (1) listen carefully to what is being presented, (2) record the most important issues, (3) conceptualize the significance of the statements which are made, (4) isolate particular problems, issues or opinions which have been raised by the presenter, and (5) pose specific questions and/or statements that are representative of the panel members' point of view. Panel members may also be selected to react only to specific elements of the presenter's remarks.

Selection of Panel Members

Individuals who are selected to serve on the panel should be alert, reasonably articulate and able to conceptualize the ideas of the presenter. The selection of panel members will vary according to the purpose of the reaction panel. Generally, the panel members should be selected as representatives of varying points of view held by the audience. Selection of panel members who have skill in listening, critical thinking and public speaking will help to insure the success of the reaction symposium as a group dynamics technique.

Bibliography

Robinson, Russell D. *An Introduction to Helping Adults Learn and Change* Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Omnibook Co., 1979

Morgan, Barton; Holmes, Glenn E.; and Bundy, Clarence E. *Methods in Adult Education* Danville, Illinois, The Interstate Printers and Publishers Inc., 1976

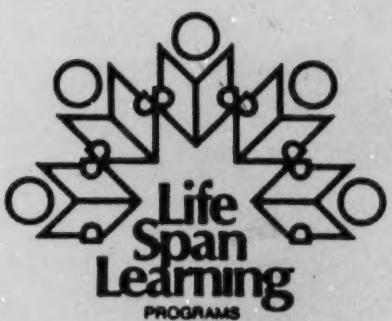
Suggested Reading

Introduction to Teaching Adults. Module 2: Using Instructional Techniques
Sands, Janet
Available for purchase from British Columbia Univ., Center for Continuing Education, 5997 Iona Dr., Vancouver, BC, V6T 2A4

The Training Methods Manual
Kowski, Frank; Eitington, Julius
Mather Training Center, Harpers Ferry, W. VA. August 1976 112 pages

Adult Education Procedures, Methods and Techniques: A Classified and Annotated Bibliography, 1953-1963 Aker, George F.
Syracuse Univ., NY, Library of Continuing Education 1965 163 pages

Buzz Groups and Videotape Speed Training at Ernst and Ernst
Larick, Donald
Training in Business and Industry
8, 4, 50-51, April 1971



Conference & Institute Division